

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00
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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4186
INFO USIA WASHDC
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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FOR: USUN FOR USIA REP

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OVIP, PGOV, NI, US
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE INTERVIEW WITH DR. BOLAJI AKINYEMI

REF: STATE 238177

1. IN REPLY TO PARA 2, REFTTEL, DR. AKINYEMI CAN BE REACHED VIA NIGERIAN MISSION TO THE UN OR NIGERIAN EMBASSY WASHDC., TO WORK OUT DETAILED ARRANGEMENTS.
2. AS FURTHER BACKGROUND FOR DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE, THE DAILY TIMES, NIGERIA'S LARGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT DAILY NEWSPAPER, CARRIED THE FOLLOWING EDITORIAL ON OCT 5 ENTITLED: 'AGROBUSINESS: WHO WILL RUN IT?' COMPLETE TEXT FOLLOWS:

"THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS HAS FINALLY BEGUN TO DO PRECISELY WHAT IT WAS SET UP FOR. THE IMPRESSION WAS BEGINNING TO GET AROUND THAT IT WAS SIMPLY A LARGE REPLICAF OF THE THINK TANK, QUIETLY PREPARING VOLUMES OF ALTERNATIVE
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POLICY OPTIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS AND UNINTERESTED IN INFLUENCING PUBLIC OPINION DIRECTLY NOW, IT SEEMS, THE INSTITUTE HAS DECIDED TO THROW ITSELF INTO THE SOMETIMES MURKY ARENA OF PUBLIC CONTROVERSY AND, WE FEEL, ABOUT TIME, TOO. FOR IF PUBLIC OPINION HAS ANY INFLUENCE ON THE DECISIONS OF OUR POLICY-MAKERS, THE PUBLIC DOES NEED SOME INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE ON THE GROUNDS UPON WHICH IT MUST FORM INTELLIGENT

OPINION ON NATIONAL ISSUES, AND THE INSTITUTE IS SUPERBLY PLACED TO PROVIDE THIS INFORMATION ANJSGUIDANCE.

'IT IS ALL THE MORE NOTEWORTHY, THEN, THAT THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE INSTITUTE, DR. BOLAJI AKINYEMI, SHOULD APPEAR PUBLICLY UNIMPRESSED BY THE TRADITIONAL ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL OF MAJOR SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY. HE WAS REPORTED LAST WEEK TO HAVE RECOMMENDED THAT GOVERNMENT KEEP WELL AWAY FROM THE AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS, SHORT OF PROVIDING THE LAND FOR LARGE PLANTATIONS. THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR RUNNING SUCH PLANTATIONS, HE ARGUED, SHOULD BE LEFT IN THE HANDS OF PRIVATE COMPANIES (INCLUDING FOREIGN ONES) AND INDIVIDUALS; GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, BEING ON FIXED AND REGULAR SALARIES, WERE UNLIKELY TO HAVE THE REQUIRED MOTIVATION, WHICH ONLY THE DESIRE FOR LONGER AND LARGER PROFITS AND SALARIES COULD PRESUMABLY ENCOURAGE.

"WE COULDN'T AGREE WITH HIM MORE, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE DISMAL RECORD OF OUR PUBLICLY RUN CORPORATIONS TO DATE. BUT BEFORE WE BEGIN TO BE CARRIED AWAY BY THE ATTRACTIONS OF EFFICIENCY, WE MIGHT AS WELL NOTE THAT THERE IS INDEED A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT IN, AND GOVERNMENT ADMINISTERING OF ANY GIVEN ECONOMIC PROJECT.

"IN OUR PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, THERE IS EVERY REASON TO DISCOURAGE ANY FURTHER EXPANSION IN THE ROLE OF PUBLICLY-RUN-CORPORATIONS IN THE ECONOMY. THEY ARE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WASTEFUL, INEFFICIENT AND MAINLY FOR LACK OF COMPETITION, THEY SUFFER FROM UNDUE COMPLACENCY.

"BUT LIMITED GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT IN SPECIFIC INDUSTRIES IS NOT SO EASILY DISMISSED. EVEN IN THE CONTEXT OF DR. AKIN-YEMI'S APPARENTLY NON-IDEOLOGICAL CONCERNS, THERE IS STILL SOME MERIT IN THE ARGUMENT THAT GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT IN INDUSTRY CAN PROVIDE REASONABLE CHECKS ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROFIT MOTIVE IS MADE THE MAJOR GOAL OF BUSINESS. IN ECONOMIC TERMS, IT CAN REGULATE THE COST TO THE CONSUMER OF FINISHED PRODUCTS WHILE AT THE SAME TIME NOT IMPAIRING ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY TOO VIOLENTLY. IT CAN ALSO PROVIDE THE FINANCIAL ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH INDIGENOUS COMPANIES SORELY NEED THEREBY LIMITING THE INFLUENCE ON THE ECONOMY WHICH EXPATRIATE COMPANIES COULD HAVE THROUGH THEIR INVESTMENTS.

"BUT THE MATTER, REALLY, IS ULTIMATELY A QUESTION OF BUSINESS MORALITY, THERE IS INDEED A CRYING NEED FOR EFFICIENCY IN OUR INDUSTRIAL INSTITUTIONS. BUT PROVIDED WE ARE NOT TOO TEDIOUSLY DOCTRINAIRE, IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR US TO COMBINE THE DESIRE FOR EFFICIENCY WITH A CERTAIN REGARD FOR THE PUBLIC INTEREST. THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR PRO-

MISES TO BECOME A MAJOR ONE IN OUR ECONOMY. GOVERNMENT CONTROL OR ADMINISTRATION OF IT WOULD BE DISASTROUS. BUT EQUALLY, A REASONABLE LEVEL OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COOPERATION IN FUNDING IT IS PROBABLY OUR BEST BET AT THE MOMENT."

3. EMBASSY APPRECIATES ASSTGSEC MOOSE'S AGREEMENT TO BE INTERVIEWED. SUBJECT MATTERS FOR INTERVIEW ARE AS OUTLINED IN PARA 1 REFTTEL. WE SUGGEST DEPARTMENT REMAIN OPEN TO POSSIBILITY OF ON-CAMERA COVERAGE IN VIEW AKINYEMI'S CLEAR DESIRE BRING BACK A TAPE. WE TRUST DEPARTMENT WILL GIVE AKINYEMI APPROPRIATE EXPLANATION FOR SECRETARY'S INABILITY TO RECEIVE HIM.

4. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, NTV CREW PRESENTLY IN US PREPARING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FOR OBASANJO VISIT WHICH WILL INCLUDE SIX, DAILY 10-MINUTE SATELLITE BROADCASTS (THREE FROM WASHINGTON AND THREE FROM NEW YORK) PLUS LIVE TRANSMISSION OF OBASANJO'S UN SPEECH.

5. DECONTROL 10/7/78
EASUM

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Sent Date: 07-Oct-1977 12:00:00 am
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